

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /054 W

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R 120450Z FEB 75

FM AMCONSUL SYDNEY

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6047

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SYDNEY 0299

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: AS, PFOR

SUBJ: NSW REPLACEMENT OF FORMER SENATOR MURPHY

REF: CANBERRA 0928

SUMMARY: WHILE NSW CABINET HAS BACKED UP PREMIER LEWIS' STRIDENT THREAT TO APPOINT A LIBERAL TO TAKE LABOR SENATOR MURPHY'S SEAT, LEWIS HAS LEFT HIMSELF A LOOPHOLE AND MANY BELIEVE HE WILL EVENTUALLY APPOINT A LABOR PARTY REPLACEMENT, THEREBY PRESERVING THE CONVENTION WHICH HAS APPLIED SINCE INTRODUCTION OF PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION IN SENATE AFTER THE WAR.

1. ACCORDING LIB MLA PETER COLEMAN, LEWIS PROBABLY ACTED ON IMPULSE AND THE REPORTED "UNANIMOUS SUPPORT" OF STATE CABINET PROBABLY REFLECTS ONLY A DESIRE NOT TO BE ON RECORD AS OPPOSING NEW PREMIER AT THIS STAGE. LEWIS IS LIKELY TO BE UNDER CONSIDERABLE PRESSURE FROM BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE HIS PARTY. IF OPPOSITION IN FEDERAL SENATE FAILS TO SUPPORT HIM, HE WILL BE LIKELY TO RETREAT VIA THE ESCAPE ROUTE HE HAS ALREADY PREPARED, NAMELY, A STUDY OF THE "LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL" ASPECTS.

2. ALP MEMBER PETER WESTERWAY, DEFEATED SIXTH SLOT SENATE CANDIDATE IN 1974, HAS DECLARED FOR THE VACANT SEAT AND WILL PROBABLY

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BE SELECTED BY STATE ALP AT ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE MEETING.

LIKE COLEMAN, WESTERWAY BELIEVES THAT ULTIMATELY LEWIS WILL FOLLOW THE CONVENTION BY APPOINTING LABOR PARTY MEMBER. ON THIS ASSUMPTION, STATE ALP WILL GO AHEAD WITH PRE-SELECTION ON FRIDAY FEB 14.

3. BOTH COMMENT THAT BY SHOOTING FROM THE HIP LEWIS HAS PRE-EMPTED THE HEADLINES THEREBY TAKING THE HEAT OFF FED GOVT AND ALP IN FACE OF OTHERWISE HEAVY PUBLIC CRITICISM OF MURPHY. BOTH ALSO BELIEVE WHAT IS AT STAKE IS HARDLY WORTH THE ABRASION WHICH WOULD RESULT FROM LEWIS INSISTENCE ON APPOINTING NON-LABOR MAN. WITH A FEDERAL ELECTION OF HALF THE SENATE ALREADY INEVITABLE THIS YEAR OR EARLY NEXT YEAR, THE LIBS HAVE LITTLE TO GAIN AND WOULD STAND TO LOSE THE EXTRA SEAT THEN. MOREOVER WITH TOWNLEY OF TASMANIA HAVING REJOINED THE LIBERAL PARTY AND THE OPPOSITION OFFERING TO PAIR OFF AGAINST THE VACANT SEAT, THE PRESSURE ON LEWIS TO COOL THE ISSUE BY APPOINTING A LABOR MAN WILL MOUNT.

4. COMMENT: DESPITE THE LOGIC OF FOREGOING, LEWIS IS A STRONG AND IMPULSIVE MAN AND IT CANNOT BE RULED OUT THAT HE WILL STICK TO HIS GUNS EVEN THOUGH WEIGHT OF OPINION SEEMS TO BE OTHERWISE.  
HANNAH

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